



# Air Force Academy Wins Cyber Defense Exercise

FT. MEADE, Md. — Keeping network design to a classic, textbook secure layout without a lot of frills helped the Air Force Academy win the National Security Administration's annual Cyber Defense Exercise.

It was conducted April 10-14 at the NSA's Maryland headquarters at Ft. Meade and the nation's four military service academies.

"I believe one reason behind our success was a focus on fundamental security principles, rather than specific tools," said Capt. Sean Butler, computer science instructor and officer in charge of the Academy team.

**"It's very difficult to defend a network that you don't fully understand, so our cadets spent a lot of effort making sure they all had at least a basic familiarity with all the components of our network and how they fit together," said Captain Butler.**

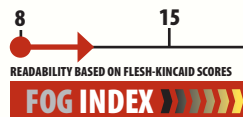
Red Cell challenged cadet Blue Cell teams to defend a closed-computer network they designed, built and configured at their respec-

tive academies. The network software was pre-configured with known vulnerabilities, forcing cadet teams to diagnose and remove the vulnerabilities while maintaining their network's e-mail, instant messaging, file sharing, Web and several other service features.

**NSA and military specialists graded each team's ability to effectively maintain network services while detecting, responding to, and recovering from network security intrusions or compromises.**

Red Cell's greatest measure of success against the Air Force Academy cadets was making the cadets' Web page say "We love Red Cell."

Other service academies also fell victim to Red Cell tactics, which sometimes played on the inherent rivalries between the academies, with a little cyber "smack talk." Red Cell members hacked the West Point team's Web site and changed it to read "Go Navy, Beat Army," during the exercise.



Teams used exploitation techniques readily available on the Internet, in their attempts to bring down the respective cadets' systems, including spyware, e-mail bombardment and fake messages trying to get cadets to download malicious "patches."

## JARGON WATCH

NSA: National Security Administration

Going over the rules are Cadets 1st Class Chris Patten and Clyde Cross.